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~~XNUC~~ Case for Pessimism

Thursday, February 03, 2005 [edited 12-17-08] [old: XNUC]

Why nuclear war is highly likely in the mid- to long-range future; and why efforts to avoid it are not only very difficult but are likely to fail.

Given our present military technology, posture and doctrines (especially in the US and Russia, but also in all the present and likely nuclear weapons states) the basis for pessimism--about a high probability of eventual large-scale nuclear weapons use and the difficulty and unlikelihood of successful efforts to avert this-- rests on aspects of "human nature," especially as organized in hierarchical organizations and nation-states. little-recognized and problematic.

These include aspects often seen as problematic, including drive for power, greed, focus on short-run advantage, and instincts toward revenge (often disguised as "justice"). But they also include phenomena of conscience, morality, religion, loyalties, "discretion" (secrecy), obedience and personal self-sacrifice that are generally very highly regarded, rewarded and admired. In existing circumstances, it is in part these aspects of our "better nature," our "highest selves"—manifested in unquestioning obedience to authority-- that lead us toward doom, and make it close to impossible to change course.

Our own country leads the way, and (with Britain) has done so for over sixty years. That has been true since about 1942 (with Germany's blitz of London essentially over, succeeded by British and later US area bombing of cities, and the start of the Manhattan Project).

Global change is needed, and the full participation--and probably leadership, unlikely as that is-- of the US is essential to this change. But the US has always been and under the Bush administration remains the single greatest opponent of the necessary changes in attitudes directly relating to nuclear war. (Prior to Gorbachev, the Soviet Union, especially during the Brezhnev period, was a sturdy partner in this opposition.)